

**Nebraska Sign Language Interpreter Review Board Meeting**  
**Final (approved 2.21.2023)**

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 from 3pm – 5pm

4600 Valley Road, Room 4A, Lincoln, NE and via Zoom

- **Welcome**

The meeting of the Nebraska Interpreter Review Board (IRB) was called to order on December 1<sup>st</sup>, at 3:04 pm by Ms. Nancy Flearl, Chairperson, at 4600 Valley Road, Room 4A in Lincoln, Nebraska.

- **Notice of Open Meetings Act**

Chairperson Ms. Flearl announced that the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda has been kept current and available at the Commission's office and on their website. The materials generally used by the board for this meeting are on the table in a public folder that is available to the public for this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, {Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available with the public folder for the duration of the meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

- **Roll Call**

For the record, board members, Ms. Nancy Flearl, Ms. Margie Propp, and Ms. Kelsey Cruz – NCDHH Interim Director were present. Mrs. Tami Richardson-Nelson and Ms. Vonda Apking joined via Zoom. NCDHH staff present were Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator and Ms. Jamie Peterson, Staff Assistant. Ms. Tricia Tighe joined via Zoom at 3:47 pm. Interpreters for the meeting were Amber Tucker and Pamela Duncan.

- **Review of Agenda**

Ms. Flearl reviewed the agenda with the Board Members. Ms. Flearl expressed her appreciation of and to the public joining in on this meeting.

- **Acceptance of Agenda**

No changes were presented for the agenda. Ms. Propp moved to accept the agenda as written, seconded by Mrs. Richardson-Nelson. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

- **Acceptance of Minutes**

There were no corrections suggested to the meeting minutes from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson made a motion to approve acceptance of the minutes, and Ms. Propp seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.

- **Interim Executive Director Report – Kelsey Cruz**

- a. **Agency Updates**

- Ms. Cruz introduced herself and her role as interim executive director. She provided an update on the status of hiring for NCDHH’s Executive Director position. She reported that NCDHH is going through a period of transition. The agency is continuing its work and outreach for LB 1014 ARPA funding. She provided additional explanation on the ARPA funding including the two categories of legal and rural communication assistance and how the funding can be used. Ms. Cruz announced that there is a Full Board meeting next Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, which will take place in Lincoln. No questions were presented to Ms. Cruz. Ms. Flearl commented on the importance of the ARPA funding and getting the word out for this type of assistance. There is plenty of funding left waiting to be utilized.

- **Public Comments**

- a. Member of the community, Ms. Vali Hitz, expressed that she is happy to be here as a Deaf consumer who uses interpreters in her daily life. Ms. Hitz shared her experience that she feels the Deaf community in NE is not aware of many of the organizations like NCDHH, Interpreter Review Board (IRB) and Interpreter Issues Committee (IIC) that are in place to serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Not only are there many people unaware of these services, but they are unsure of how to get in contact or what the services are. Branches of the NCDHH may need to be more proactive in getting the word out that they exist. Ms. Hitz described some of her struggles in navigating certain forms regarding interpreter complaints and feedback. In response, Ms. Flearl reflected on the last IRB meeting held at the Omaha Association of the Deaf (OAD) where there was great community feedback. Ms. Flearl suggested the idea of having more meetings or the next meeting at the Lincoln Association of the Deaf (LAD) or where there is a larger group of people.

*Discussion on where past meetings have been held.*

- b. Another member of the community, Ms. Jean Bradford, from Syracuse, NE expressed that she runs an in-home daycare, and has been having issues getting interpreters to cover her required certification trainings and classes to keep up with her license, which has also been brought to the attention of the NCDHH Executive Director. She expressed that issues finding available interpreters could affect her business as she is unable to attend classes and receive continuing education without an interpreter. As an additional comment, Jean reported that her son is frustrated with the lack of interpreters in the schools. The lack of interpreters are causing issues, and this has been an ongoing issue for years.

*Discussion regarding the IRB’s awareness of the lack of interpreters.*

Ms. Flearl suggested providing more outreach to high schools to bring awareness of interpreting as a career or teach sign language classes to younger students. However, there is still an issue with having enough qualified people to teach these classes. There is only one nearby interpreter training program at the University of Nebraska – Omaha.

*Discussion on disconnect between bodies like NCDHH, NeRID, IIC, etc. and the community.*

Ms. Propp suggested calling the VPs or directors of several different organizations, agencies or bodies and providing hard copies of complaint forms or other outreach material so that they can reference the information themselves at their own meetings when necessary. Ms. Cruz added to the discussion by restating the purpose of the NCDHH as an information & referral agency, and Ms. Sinkler reviewed state statutes describing the role of the IRB. Following the review of the IRB statutes, some of the comments made here today may not be directly addressed by the IRB, but the concerns brought up are still appreciated and will be echoed onto higher and more appropriate bodies like the Full Board. Ms. Cruz also thanked the community members present for sharing their experiences as she is finding a lot of things to work on in her role as Public Information Officer at NCDHH and of things to promote on the NCDHH social media accounts and with the Advocacy Specialists.

- c. Ms. Hitz asked if anyone from this meeting will be present at the Full Board meeting next week to which Ms. Cruz said she will be present, and Ms. Flearl would check her availability and touch base on whether she can attend. No further comments or questions were presented.
- **Old Business**
    - a. No old business was presented.
  - **New Business**
    - a. To utilize the OAD Hall where there has been great community involvement in the past, the next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 , in Omaha at the OAD Hall from 1-3 pm. Ms. Flearl commented that all the comments and ideas shared today will be followed up on in March at the next meeting. Ms. Sinkler will send out an email to announce next meeting date. Mrs. Richardson-Nelson will reserve the OAD Hall for the date.
  - **Announcements**
    - a. Ms. Hitz and Ms. Propp shared an announcement regarding a Signing Camp Chili Cook Off on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in Raymond, NE at 11am. This is a great place for IRB members and NCDHH staff to attend and experience a different social setting. Attendance is \$10 per person, and a promotion has been posted on

Facebook. Ms. Cruz remarked that she will reach out to help promote this event on the NCDHH side. No other announcements followed.

- **Adjourn**

- a. Ms. Propp made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 and Ms. Tighe seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with all voting ayes.